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East Asia Biweekly Review

24 January 1978

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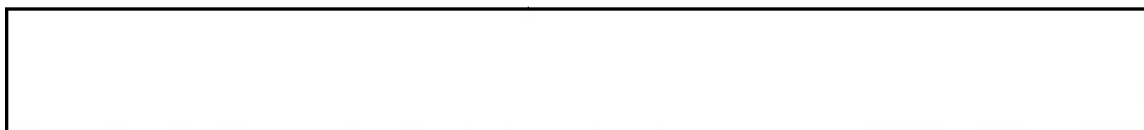
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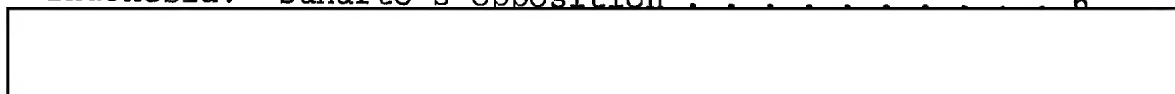
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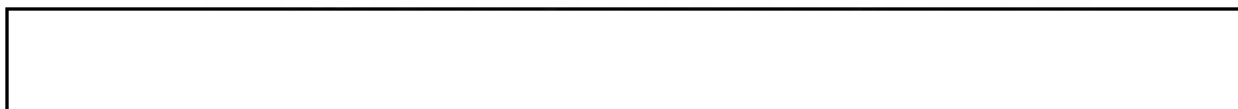
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Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tours Southeast Asia

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh's recent diplomatic trip through Southeast Asia illustrates Hanoi's continuing interest in improving bilateral relations with its non-Communist neighbors--an interest no doubt strengthened by the current conflict with Cambodia. Trinh's tour was essentially a repeat of Vice Foreign Minister Phan Hien's trip through the region in July 1976, and Trinh again carried the now familiar message of Hanoi's desire for peaceful and cooperative relations. Singapore was the only ASEAN member excluded from Trinh's itinerary--a reaction to Singapore's recent refusal to send two hijackers of a Vietnamese plane back to Vietnam. Thailand, which was similarly out of favor and bypassed in 1976, was perhaps the high point of Trinh's tour.

The Foreign Minister signed trade, economic, and technical agreements at each stop except Jakarta, where Vietnam's dispute with Indonesia over the continental shelf between the two countries proved an insurmountable obstacle. The Vietnamese apparently had hoped to secure Jakarta's agreement to postpone oil exploration in the disputed area, but the Indonesians sidestepped the issue and insisted that any economic agreement needed further study.

Trinh's cordial reception in Bangkok officially marked the end of a prolonged period of openly suspicious and often acerbic relations during Thanin Kraivichian's tenure as Prime Minister of Thailand. An agreement to normalize relations, which was reached in August 1976 and then derailed by the change of governments in Bangkok, was reaffirmed during Trinh's visit with the announcement that ambassadors would soon be exchanged. In addition to the trade, economic, and technical cooperation pact, the two parties signed a civil aviation agreement that permits overflights and the inauguration of flights between their two capitals. Trinh was granted an audience with the King--a special

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gesture that signaled the importance the Thai Government places on improved relations with Hanoi.

There is limited potential for trade between Hanoi and the rest of Southeast Asia and little in the way of practical assistance they can provide Hanoi. These agreements and the limited assistance programs of the ASEAN states have more symbolic than practical value for all parties. Both Hanoi and its ASEAN neighbors have an interest in Vietnam's increased contacts in the region--Hanoi sees them as a means to increase its influence and ASEAN hopes to "civilize" Vietnam by involving it in the development of the region.

The Southeast Asian states clearly welcome Hanoi's peaceful overtures, but nonetheless remain suspicious of Vietnam's long-range goals in the region. Ironically, Vietnam's conflict with Cambodia seems to have reassured them that Hanoi will be too preoccupied for the next few years with more immediate problems at home and on its borders to cause trouble further afield. Yet at the same time, some Southeast Asian countries are concerned that the dispute may over time whet Vietnam's appetite for aggression.

Hanoi's continuing complaints about ASEAN and the residual US military presence in the region do little to assuage these suspicions. Although Vietnamese propaganda attacks on ASEAN have subsided in recent months, Trinh nonetheless protested to the Indonesians, and presumably to others, that ASEAN had military "overtones." The Vietnamese generally have played down the issue of the US bases in the Philippines, yet Trinh repeated the theme throughout his trip that foreign bases must be removed from the region before genuine peace, independence, and neutrality can be achieved.

Hanoi seems to be aware that its compulsive opposition to ASEAN is counterproductive. Trinh was less explicit on Vietnam's preference for bilateral relations than Vietnamese statements have been in the past and endorsed the principle of regional cooperation, calling

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for a "new form" of cooperation built on a "new basis." His arguments for the need to "cleanse" the region of foreign influence may reflect Vietnam's discomfort with the pressures it feels from Moscow and Peking as much as Hanoi's desire to separate the non-Communist countries from their political and military ties to the West. In any event, his remarks were coolly received by Trinh's hosts, who view such "neutrality" as simply removing the checks on Vietnam's potential leverage over its militarily weaker neighbors.

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Indonesia: Suharto's Opposition

Although Indonesian President Suharto seems assured of reelection this March, the rising, more strident level of opposition and the government's recent adoption of harsh measures to blunt this dissent suggest that Suharto's support has reached a new low. It is unlikely that the President's opposition will decline after his anticipated reelection, and this could affect his ability to complete a third five-year term. Opposition groups, however, are limited by their own internal weaknesses and lack of military support. Nevertheless, should public disorder result because of their efforts, high military circles might begin to give serious consideration to replacing Suharto.

The most vocal and publicized opponents of Suharto are the students, who criticize him for his tolerance of corruption, increasing neglect of the country's basic economic and social needs, and refusal to delegate more power to civilians. Earlier, these students simply wanted Suharto to respond by making changes; recently, however, some have begun calling for his ouster. Students actively opposing Suharto, a minority of the total student population, generally compose three groups:

- Officially organized student councils, most notably those of the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, Gajah Mada University in Jogjakarta, and the Institute of Technology in Bandung. These groups transcend the various religious and ethnic divisions in the country, and apparently have been the prime movers of recent large-scale demonstrations.
- Unofficial student organizations which are divided along religious and ideological lines. Among these groups, the Muslim Islamic Student Union (HMI) is the least factionalized. It reportedly is receiving aid from the Moslem-dominated Unity Development Party (PPP) to finance anti-Suharto activities.

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- Underground student activists who distribute pamphlets critical of the government.

The government's closure last weekend of eight newspapers in Jakarta and the arrest of approximately 100 students suggest Suharto's increasing apprehension of the impact of the press and the students on the general populace. Although Suharto's moderate tendencies continue to prevail--many of the students have been released--continued student disruption and the accompanying decline in Suharto's prestige will probably lead to more hard-line actions.

A second, and perhaps potentially more dangerous opposition group, could develop in the devout Moslem community. Until now, Muslim opposition to Suharto has been limited to fanatic militant terrorist groups and the PPP, although PPP leaders have not been immune to blandishments of government posts. Suharto's insistence, however, on recognizing mysticism as an official religion may incite many otherwise nonextremist Muslims to take to the streets. Such an event, combined with further student demonstrations, would probably create sufficient public disorder to erode some support for Suharto within high military echelons. Suharto is reportedly trying to compromise on this issue.

Some well-known civilian and retired military leaders also are speaking out or working against Suharto:

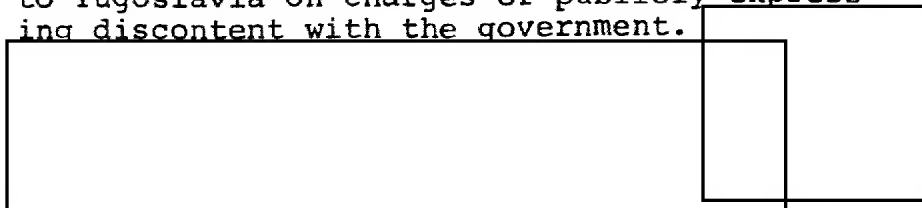
- Sawito Kartowibono, a former government official who last year managed to obtain the signatures of the highly respected former Vice President Hatta and four influential religious leaders on a letter critical of the Suharto regime. The government has taken Sawito to court on charges of conspiracy, a bizarre event which has redounded to Suharto's disadvantage. The trial has exposed detailed allegations of corruption on the part of Mrs. Suharto.
- General Abdul Haris Nasution, the only senior general who survived the slaughter of generals during the abortive Communist coup of 1965.

 The government has so far tolerated Nasution because

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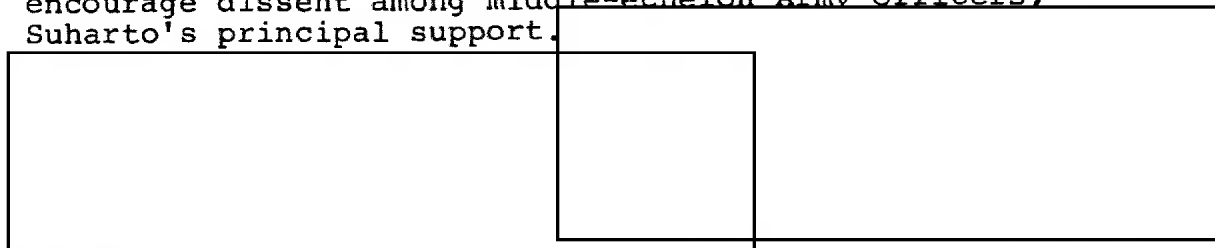
of his stature and apparent reluctance to participate in any opposition movement espousing the use of force.

- Major General Ishak Juarsa, a former Chief of Staff of the Siliwangi Division who was recalled last year from his post as Ambassador to Yugoslavia on charges of publicly expressing discontent with the government.

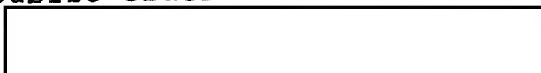


- Former Jakarta mayor Ali Sadikin, a popular figure in the capital who is working with the HMI to publish economic reports embarrassing to the government.

Since none of these figures control troops, they do not directly threaten Suharto's position. Nevertheless, he is probably concerned that their efforts might encourage dissent among middle-echelon Army officers, Suharto's principal support.



Suharto's future thus depends ultimately on whether he can maintain sufficient public order to command the confidence of the military.



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The Philippine Opposition and Legislative Elections

President Marcos' call for parliamentary elections on 2 April represents another step in his political "normalization" program as well as an effort to deflect US criticism of his regime's human rights image. It is also a carefully calculated move aimed at taking advantage of a weakened political opposition, already fragmented at the national level. The opposition must now decide whether to participate in the campaign.



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Some opposition members obviously believe that if they do not take an active part, they will have forfeited a rare opportunity to publicize their cause. On the other hand, a significant number believe that participating in an election will constitute tacit recognition of the election's legitimacy.

Marcos has clearly stacked the cards in his favor in several politically adroit ways. Local districts will choose candidates to run on a regional basis--thus undercutting the residual political strength of pre-martial law opponents who had served the smaller electoral districts. He also plans to have 12 seats out of the proposed 192-seat assembly reserved for candidates selected by "approved" organizations for youth, labor, and farm constituencies.

Marcos claims that he has consulted with politicians of the "Old Society" in what he believes is an effort to discourage them from running for the assembly. He has hinted that he is eager to bring "new blood" into the parliament. Marcos may well allow some "pseudo" opposition candidates to run in order to lend an even greater facade of legitimacy to the election process.

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During the period immediately preceding the 17 December referendum, which endorsed Marcos' tenure as president as well as prime minister after the formation of an interim national assembly, several leading opposition figures emerged from political hibernation. They were significantly emboldened by the government's decision to temporarily relax its martial law strictures against public criticism.

Former President Macapagal, who remained silent during the first few years of martial law, became the most vocal opponent. Opposition leaders such as Senators Roxas and Diokno, who had borne the brunt of the anti-Marcos effort, began to speak out. Whereas a year ago the press would have ignored their remarks, this time almost every opposition speech was reported in relatively unbiased fashion on the front pages of the Manila dailies. Almost every point raised by the opposition, however, provoked a flood of replies from Marcos cabinet members and political columnists with planted progovernment articles.

The opposition has increasingly focused its attacks on Marcos the man--his material excesses and his abandonment of democratic traditions. The government claims the chaotic political conditions that predated Marcos' authoritarian rule made the imposition of martial law imperative.

Marcos realizes that most opposition leaders have all but lost what significant popular following they once enjoyed. He also recognizes, however, that if he were to permit the revival of major opposition parties--even with the odds so heavily weighted against them--it could be politically embarrassing at a time when he is heavily involved in complex base negotiations with the US.

Indeed, Marcos is obviously still unsure of how the elections should be run, and considerable confusion exists about the ground rules. He is likely to decide later this month whether pre - martial law political parties, such as the Nationalista and the Liberal Party, can register for the electoral campaign. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Aquino, during his long imprisonment, has become a symbol for the opposition. He has urged his colleagues to participate in the forthcoming elections and may himself decide to run for a seat, despite an unpublicized presidential decree prohibiting detainees from voting or running for office.

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Marcos will ensure that the election campaign poses no serious challenge to his regime. The question of human rights, however, which has affected many critical domestic issues, such as the base negotiations and the Muslim insurgency, will continue to play an influential role in affecting the ultimate course of the legislative elections. [REDACTED]

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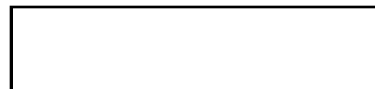
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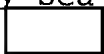
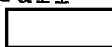

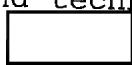
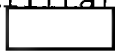
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North Korean Chronology

12 November	North Korea releases a Japanese fishing vessel seized on 10 November for allegedly violating the military sea boundary off the east coast. 	25X1
14	The UN Food and Agriculture Organization admits North Korea as a full member at a conference in Rome. 	25X1
20	North Korea releases a second Japanese fishing vessel, seized on 19 November for allegedly violating the coastal security zone. Pyongyang says it is returning the crew and boat out of consideration for the "friendly relations" between the Korean and Japanese people. 	25X1
29	Pyongyang announces that North Korea and the USSR have concluded an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation for 1978. 	25X1
1 December	KCNA, the North Korean official news agency, reports the gist of what is apparently a recent speech by North Korean President Kim Il-sung to political workers in the armed forces. In the speech, Kim outlines a new 10-point code spelling out basic rules of military conduct and discipline. 	25X1
5	Han Si-hae, formerly a Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, calls on Secretary General Waldheim to present	

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- 5 December credentials as the new chief of North Korea's observer mission at the UN. [] 25X1
- 8-11 East German party leader Honecker visits North Korea. Underlining the cool state of Pyongyang's relations with Moscow, North Korea omits several references by Honecker praising the contribution of the Soviet Union to detente and arms reduction. In a speech at a rally on 10 December, Kim Il-song emphatically rejects a "two-Germans" solution for the Korean Peninsula, characterizing the two situations as "fundamentally different." [] 25X1
- 9 The 25th working-level meeting of North and South Korean Red Cross representatives is uneventful; the two sides agree to hold the next meeting on 20 March 1978. [] 25X1
- 12 The President of the North Korean central trade bank meets in Peking with Chinese Vice Premier Yu Chiu-li and Bank of China officials. [] 25X1
- 13 The Fifth Central Committee of the Korean Worker's Party (KWP) convenes its 15th plenary meeting, with Secretary General Kim Il-song presiding. The public agenda calls for consideration of the second seven-year economic plan (1978-84) and "the organizational question." [] 25X1
- 14 A spokesman for North Korea's Foreign Ministry issues a statement protesting alleged harassment by the Japanese police of the pro-Pyongyang organization of Korean residents in Japan. [] 25X1

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15-17 December

The newly elected Sixth Supreme People's Assembly holds its first session. The three-point agenda includes the reelection of Kim Il-song as President, the designation of a new cabinet, and the formal unveiling of the new seven-year economic plan (1978-84). Yi Chong-ok, a veteran economic specialist, is installed as Premier. []

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Kim Il-song delivers the major speech at the Supreme People's Assembly. Kim outlines the new seven-year plan and calls for renewed efforts to improve government performance and eliminate bureaucratism. []

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1 January

In his annual New Year's address, Kim Il-song stresses the need to improve economic performance during the new seven-year plan. []

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An editorial in *Nodong Sinmun*, the party daily, sets a goal of 8.8 million tons of grain production in 1978. []

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